

Effingham  
Aden Vicinity  
Prince William County, Virginia

HABS No. VA-575

HABS  
VA  
76-AD.V,  
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PHOTOGRAPHS  
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey  
National Park Service  
Washington 25, D. C.

"Effingham"  
Aden Vicinity  
Prince William County, Virginia

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"Effingham"

Present Owner: Dr. O. Anderson Engh

Present Occupant and Use: Country home of owner

Description: "Effingham" is one of the few remaining large plantation houses of Prince William County and the place has been almost entirely neglected by historians and architects. The house, a two-storied frame structure with gable roof, and central hall plan. Outside brick chimneys are paired at both ends. A "closet" at the west end apparently gave access to the dining room from an outside kitchen. Inside the main stairway is concealed and one finds also a winding service stair. The upstairs arrangement is of particular interest for a pair of dressing rooms-at either end, while the extraordinarily spacious attic boasts a sheathed storage area, still exhibiting rows of pegs for suspending clothing. Door entablatures are well executed and there is one pilastered doorway that may be described as Tudor in character. Some wainscoting remains, but the Northwest paneled room with cupboard, recorded in 1936 was reportedly sold in New York.

"Effingham" speaks eloquently of the value of HABS for the historical record. Accompanying sets of "before" and "after" photographs bring into sharp focus the steady and relentless toll being wrought by time and changing conditions. Loss of subsidiary buildings at "Effingham" together with encroachments of a military installation, have completely altered its character as a plantation home.

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History: "Effingham" was the home of Colonel William Alexander (1744-1814) and a descendant of Philip Alexander, second son of the emigrant. This is the same family for whom the city of Alexandria was named. William Alexander is believed to have built the house in 1765 when he married Sigismunda Mary Massey. The Alexanders reared a family of sixteen children, including a set of twins. Their family Bible is still preserved with entries of marriages, births, and deaths, some dating back to 1696.

The Alexander burying ground is located on the lane leading to the house. It is a matter of record that Eleanor Calvert died while visiting at Effingham and was laid to rest among her friends, the Alexanders. She will be recalled as Mrs. David Stuart at that time, but previously the widow of John Parke Custis, son of Martha Washington. In recent years Eleanor Calvert Stuart's remains have been reinterred at Pohick Church.

References:

Sigismunda Mary Frances Chapman, A History of Chapman and Alexander Families, Richmond, 1946, pp. 83-5.

Prepared by: Russell Jones and Worth Bailey, HABS, National Park Service,  
August 19, 1959.

Approved: \_\_\_\_\_

*Dick Sutton*  
Chief Architect

Date 10/22/59